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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the relationship between Korean culture and the historical development of its kindergarten (preschool) curriculum. After reviewing the values that were emphasized in traditional Korean society, focusing on ethics, loyalty and filial piety, propriety, and gender roles, the paper provides examples of how these values influences prenatal and early childhood care and education. The history of formal early childhood education in Korea is traced, focusing on the introduction of kindergartens by Japanese authorities in 1897, the influence of educational theorist Friedrich Froebel and Christian missionaries in the early 20th century, and the development of successive National Kindergarten Curricula in South Korea after 1945. The paper outlines the main features of the 1969, 1979, 1981, 1987, and 1992 National Kindergarten Curricula. The most recent changes have been influenced by the ideas of Maria Montessori and emphasize basic education for daily living, social relations and sense of community, traditional values, and the restoration of national homogeneity and unification. (Contains 25 references.) (MDM)

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Culture and the Korean Kindergarten Curriculum

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Introduction

The 21st century is being called the era of globalization. Robertson (1992) defined globalization as not only the concept of global cooperation in a smaller world but also as the true harmonization of the world through a consciousness and receptiveness to different cultures. In other words, in the 21st century the world's cultures will not be homogenized. Instead, the globalization era will be characterized by the emphasis on the importance of each culture as well as the cultural preference and individuality of each nation.

Culture refers to values, language, beliefs, and customs commonly shared by a group of people at a given period of time that greatly influence their opinions and actions. It is the totality of human behavior that future generations will inherit from their ancestors. Cultural characteristics of a particular group are not formed in a day. Rather, they are distinctive, historical traits founded on accumulated, commonly shared experiences of people living in the same environment over an extended period of time. Therefore, it is a socio-cultural adaptation or design for living that people have worked out in the course of their history (Ogbu, 1987, p.156).

Over the past thousand years, Koreans have developed into a highly homogenous people with a distinctive culture and language. During the early years of Korean history, structural institutions were absent in the development of early childhood education. Instead, it evolved from Korean people's deep rooted devotion to family, based on Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shamanism. In such

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a traditional society, people stressed the importance of prenatal education.

Prenatal education can be defined as the educational effort by the mother to positively influence the fetus by using selective language and being careful in her overall carriage. The contents of prenatal education include such items as things a mother-to-be should keep close, and those she should not see or hear, actions she should avoid, and foods or medication she should not take. To this end, the entire family helped the expectant mother to adhere to the suggestions. According to the books on prenatal education, a woman followed the course of prenatal education by screening her speech to use proper, beautiful words, maintain her good etiquette, and listening to beautiful music, among other things. Prenatal education can be defined as the parental effort to create an educationally conducive environment during the prenatal period.

Following the actual birth of the child, the traditional society also tried to foster the development of basic manners and habits and moral character that were necessary in their daily lives. Educating the children in proper etiquette and ethics, based on Confucianism, was considered to be the most crucial element of early childhood education.

The Japanese and the foreign missionaries gave birth to Korea's kindergartens, and they exercised substantial influence on its contents and methods of education. Today, kindergarten children are more familiar with "Cinderella" and "Snow White" than with the Korean traditional story of "Tiger and a Grandmother." Furthermore, every aspect of education, be it toys, games, songs or dances, has been overly influenced by foreign cultures (Lee, 1983). Education, of course, must seek universal values of self-realization, but it also should not ignore the historical and social characteristics of a given nation. Every society raises and teaches its children according to its own life style. Accordingly, each society has its own

unique socialization method as well as its own objectives, content, and methods of early childhood education which reflect the country's national characteristics.

Korean society has been changing rapidly in recent years. The country has become industrialized and increasingly urbanized. The structure of family is changing along with the sharply rising number of women entering the work force. Consequently, the demand for institutions providing early childhood education is growing rapidly. In the midst of this social restructuring, the traditional values which our society has long aspired to teach our children are changing. Subsequently, since the 1980s there has been a movement to find the identity of Korea's early childhood education, and this identity have begun to be reflected in the National Kindergarten Curriculum.

With this as a backdrop, this paper will seek to show how the traditional values of raising children in the family is being handed down to the next generation and is being transformed in the face of today's early childhood education institutions. First, the paper will identify the specific values that the children of the traditional Korean society were taught and analyze how those traditional cultural values are currently being emphasized in the National Kindergarten Curriculum. Then, the paper will trace the evolution of Korea's early childhood education system and its relationship, during that evolution process, with such western theories as Progressive education and those of Froebel, Montessori, and Piaget.

Early Childhood Education in Traditional Korean Society

Korea has traditionally developed its culture and values based on Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shamanism. Whereas western early childhood education was based and developed on the notion that the education of a child begins at the time of birth, Korean concept was based on the belief that the fetus, from the time of

conception, should be educated, and thus placed great emphasis on prenatal education. This belief is evident in the unique way Koreans count people's ages; a newborn's age is 1, not 0. Consequently, Koreans are always 1 year older than their western counterparts born on the same year.

Structured institutions for early childhood education did not exist then, and the children were mainly educated at home by family members and relatives. Their education, based on traditional daily living customs, can be divided into four broad areas; the importance of ethics, loyal and filial piety, propriety, and their roles as dictated by their gender.

Education on Ethics

Korea's traditional society based its educational ideology on Confucianism and considered ethics to be the most important concept of education. Based on this concept, the society had clearly defined ethical standards. Supported by those explicit standards, children in traditional households formed the foundations of their ethics education at a very early age. Family members intentionally provided an environment conducive to learning, and, compared to today's families, encouraged their children to become adults at an earlier age (Ryu, 1989).

Concept of Loyalty and Filial Piety

Koreans have traditionally valued loyalty and filial piety, and considered them to be the fundamental concepts with which all people should be raised. Loyalty and filial piety were the ultimate ideals that people strived to attain. The concept of loyalty did not simply mean loyalty to the nation; it first stressed the orderliness of one's own thoughts and mind. Confucianism, the foundation of Korea's traditional values, stressed virtue, righteousness, good manners, intelligence, and trust. Confucius particularly emphasized virtue and good manners, and considered filial piety to be the essential prerequisite in attaining virtue and good manners. Traditionally, Koreans have always lived with their parents and

grandparents, and filial piety was nurtured naturally by stressing respect for family elders. This deference for and obedience to the elders was an admirable trait, but also resulted in the development of an adult oriented, rather than child oriented, educational philosophy (Yu, 1980).

Education on Propriety

Since ancient times, Koreans placed correct manners in such high regard that Korea was known as the "Eastern Nation of Courteous People." Korea's ancestors have naturally valued propriety and human relations and, in terms of ethics and morality, they had more beautiful customs than any other nation. They fostered many traditional values such as loyalty to the nation, devotion to parents, love for siblings, and faithfulness to friends. Such traditional values were passed on to children at an early age. The importance of such values were strongly emphasized and children strictly followed in their parents' examples. According to Ryu's analysis (1992) of "Sohak", the chief educational material for children used during the Chosun Dynasty era, children between the ages of three and seven were primarily educated in correct manners and propriety. This included lessons on the accurate terms to be used when addressing elder siblings and family elders, exact uses of honorific speech, polite manners in greeting, etiquette in visiting other people's houses, and correct behavior during meals. Of these topics on propriety, the lessons for young children concentrated on basic manners and customs required for everyday living.

Lessons on Gender Roles

Traditional Korean society began teaching children at an early age what the society expected of them according to their gender. Boys and girls were not allowed to be together past the age of seven. Boys began learning the lessons the society required of them while girls learned the skills necessary to become a respected woman in the society (Yu, 1980). Girls learned cooking, sewing, and etiquette through practical

experience, and acquired knowledge, refinement, and the proper attitude needed to carry out their requirements of being a woman through imitating their mothers. Boys, on the other hand, stayed with their fathers, grandfathers, or teachers to study, learn, and imitate the values and actions of the family patriarch. Boys, as the ones to carry on the family name and continue the blood line, were predominantly preferred over girls.

This is a condensed look at the values that were particularly important as the topics of education for the children in Korea's traditional society. An understanding of these values is crucial in analyzing Korea's kindergarten curriculum which is changing along with the process of modernization in the society.

In summary, Korea's traditional society, based on strong family structures, placed a high value in obeying and deferring to the elders, and tried to perfect this concept through education on propriety. Life in a large household with extended family members and the realization of their coexistence with others in a community naturally stressed socialization above individuality, and led to placing emphasis on early education of basic manners in everyday living.

Historical Evolution of Kindergarten Curriculum

Korea's kindergarten curriculum was initially developed by the missionaries and the Japanese until the establishment of the Republic of Korea in 1945. In 1969, the Ministry of Education instituted the First National Kindergarten Curriculum, which has been revised four times, in 1979, 1981, 1987, and 1992.

Kindergarten Curriculum in the Early Years

When early childhood education was first introduced in Korea in 1897, kindergartens became synonymous with early childhood education and their development was influenced by two broad beliefs. At first, it was influenced by the Japanese perception

of early childhood education as well as the work of American missionaries. When the first kindergarten was established in 1897 for Japanese children, the curriculum was based on the theory of Freidrich Froebel. However, since his theory and methods have been in practice and assimilated with Japan's social and cultural characteristics for 25 years , it is difficult to say that Froebel's theory and methods were transferred to Korea intact. In 1914, Ewha University established a kindergarten to introduce an early childhood education curriculum based on America's Christian ideology. This was developed by Brownlee, an American missionary. Most American kindergartens at that time were based on Froebel's theory and methods; Brownlee wanted to spread those theories and pratices in Korea by translating Froebel's published works. However, the materials selected for translation concentrated on Froebel's ideas of God. Therefore, Brownlee's ideology is based more on Christianity than on Froebel's early childhood education theory.

In the early days of Brownlee's kindergarten education, the curriculum included work with Froebel's gifts and occupations; unlike the traditional theories of Froebel, the gifts were used as teaching aids. Van Fleet and Howard, who subsequently came to Korea five and ten years later respectively, were missionaries who had received their master's degrees from Columbia University. They began to operate Ewha Kindergarten based on progressive education. This development is apparent in the study conducted on the educational contents of the kindergarten (Lee, 1987a, p228). Of particular importance in 1932 was the publication of Hill's "A Conduct Curriculum for the Kindergarten and First Grade" (Burke, 1932) in Korean. It greatly influenced Korea's kindergarten education for many years. It was translated by Brownlee and was used by Ewha Hakdang (prior to Ewha Womans University) as educational material for teacher training at that time. Based on this development, it can be said that the content of kindergarten curriculum during the early days, spread by the

missionaires, was based on Froebel from a religious perspective. However, from an educational perspective, it was based on child-centered education, allowing free play and activities for the children, a program based on progressive education instead of Froebel's gift oriented education. To Korean parents who have always believed that school should be a place where adults teach academic contents to the children, this type of kindergarten education appeared to be nothing more than playing, was difficult to understand at first.

In the first quarter of the 20th century, America's ideology on kindergarten education moved away from Froebel's theory. The new progressive trend that emphasized children's real-life experiences, along with child study movement, brought about a reconstructed kindergarten curriculum. Through the efforts of Brownlee, who established Ewha Kindergarten, and frequent exchanges of American missionaries trained as kindergarten teachers, Korea's kindergarten education evolved into a progressive kindergarten curriculum emphasizing the social life of the community as the basis of children's education.

Many of the activities and materials used in kindergarten in Korea today are identical to the American kindergarten education materials used in the 1920's. At the time, there were many instances of the duplication of Japanese educational contents for use in Korea's kindergartens by Korean teachers who had studied in Japanese teacher education institutions. The curriculum mostly consisted of dances and finger plays. In 1922, Jung Whan Bang and his colleagues, who had studied in Japan, formed an alumni club called "Saekdongwhae." Led by this group, May 1 was proclaimed as 'Children's Day,' and prompted further development of kindergarten education centered around children. During this period, Japan was intent on obliterating Korea's cultural heritage and assimilating Koreans into the Japanese culture. To that end, all the lessons at schools were taught in Japanese, while wearing Japanese style clothing and haircuts was required.

Fortunately, however, kindergartens were spared from regulation by the Japanese, prompting many educators to turn to composing and writing Korean melodies and lyrics. This was due to the belief that educating young children was the only hope for keeping the Korean language alive (Lee, 1987 a). This belief resulted in the concentration of singing and storytelling in the kindergarten curriculum. During the darkest period of Korean history, when the very existence of national language and culture was at stake, the fact that children could sing Korean songs and talk in Korean in kindergartens attests to the role that kindergartens played in being the last hope for national salvation and education.

To summarize, the early days of kindergarten education was influenced by Christian education by the missionaries, Japan's attempt to assimilate Korean into Japanese culture through early education, and the development of children's songs and stories to nurture nationalism as part of the independence movement.

Prior to national independence from Japan, the kindergarten curriculum centered around Froebel's theory, brought to Korea by Japanese educators,and the progressive education theory practiced by American missionaries. Progressive education started to take root in 1930s, and it centered around children's interest, real-life experiences, and the development of social and emotional skills.

The First and Second National Kindergarten Curriculum (1969, 1979)

After the Republic of Korea came into being, the First National Kindergarten Curriculum was established in 1969. The content was divided into five areas: health, social studies, science, language, and arts. In 1979, it was divided again into four developmental areas: social and emotional skills development, cognitive development, linguistic development, and health and physical development. This change reflected the new emphasis on cognitive development in the kindergarten curriculum.

This emphasis was based on the theories of Piaget and Bruner that stressed cognitive development. This emphasis also led to widespread introduction of Montessori education. However, the educational content of cognitive development -- such as logico-mathematical knowledge, and representation -- was too abstract and difficult for the teachers to understand enough to teach the children. Therefore, the practical application in the classroom consisted of simply presenting conservation experiments used in Piaget's research, or directly teaching abstract ideas of cognitive development lessons.

According to the educational activities guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education, to facilitate the application of National Kindergarten Curriculum in the actual classrooms, the educational contents were divided into 13 units which provided for flexibility according to the actual circumstances of each kindergarten. Unit themes were selected to reflect children's immediate environment such as 'I,' 'family,' 'neighborhood,' 'spring,' 'animals,' and 'transportation methods.' Each theme was selected to emphasize habit and character formation as well as cognitive development. At this time, Korea's kindergarten curriculum was still based on America's progressive education, plus new cognitive development theories.

The Third National Kindergarten Curriculum (1981)

As Korea's education entered the 1980s, significant efforts were made to recapture Korea's own characteristics and the identity of the Korean people. Amidst this change, people began to voice their opinion that it was time to reexamine the status of Korea's early childhood education, and brought forth the task of searching for the 'identity of Korea's early childhood education' (Lee, 1987).

In 1981, the Third National Kindergarten Curriculum called for the reorganization of the kindergarten curriculum into five developmental areas: physical, cognitive, linguistic, social awareness, and emotional. In the area of cognitive development,

such topics as 'Korean Customs' and 'Korean Geography' were emphasized, while social development area stressed 'Valuing National Symbols and Observing National Ceremonies,' 'Respecting Korea's Traditional Customs,' 'Knowing and Valuing Our Cultural Heritage,' and 'Willingness to Inherit and Nurture Our Traditional Customs'. The detailed content included observing basic manners, respecting elders, knowing the national holidays, and knowing Korea's famous historical personalities. In learning Korean customs, traditional Korean clothes, food, and houses were presented, while such activities as deep bows to adults, traditional games, oriental painting using black ink on rice paper, and Korean traditional music playing were highly encouraged and listed in the kindergarten curriculum manual (Korea Education Development Institute, 1981).

The Fourth National Kindergarten Curriculum (1987)

The Fourth National Kindergarten Curriculum was not very different in its basic characteristics and organizational structure from its predecessor. The educational content was maintained without changes. The only change was seen in the enforced education of Korea's traditional culture. With the changes taking place in the 1980s, the National Kindergarten Curriculum identified the activities of traditional games in the objectives section. This refelcted an effort to establish a more independent kindergarten curriculum.

The Seoul Board of Education (1986) described the case of a kindergarten that applied 13 types of traditional games in lesson activities as an excellent example of inheriting and developing the traditional culture through learning the national wisdom and love. A reference was also made to provisions for creating a special room for learning proper etiquette and providing festivities related to traditional events in the yearly plans. All these provisions reflected the concerted efforts to find the meaning of Koreanized education. The Fifth National Kindergarten Curriculum was instituted in 1992 and further strengthened the

contents of the Fourth National Kindergarten Curriculum.

In looking at the evolution of the National Kindergarten Curriculum, one of the notable characteristics in its development is the significant influence of progressive education and child study movement. This is evident in the curricula of many traditional kindergartens in modern Korea that emphasize social and emotional development as well as basic daily habit formation, and is centered around unit topics that develop children's social awareness. Piaget's theory influenced the establishment of the content of "inquiry" area of the National Kindergarten Curriculum which is necessary for children's intellectual development. Furthermore, various western early childhood program models have been introduced in Korea since the 1980s and are currently in practice. Open education program, Distar program based on behaviorist approach, Montessori program, and High/Scope program based on constructivist approach are just some of the examples of western influence.

Modern Kindergarten Curriculum and the Value of Korean Culture

The current National Kindergarten Curriculum, amended in 1992, reflects the characteristics of Korea's early childhood education particularly well. The Ministry of Education (1992) has noted that it is trying to nurture healthy, independent, creative and morally correct individuals through its curriculum. Of these, the Ministry's primary objective is to foster a sense of morality and community awareness in people as well as their responsibilities as citizens. This reflects many faces of today's Korean society. The advance of industrialization and urbanization brought significant changes in family makeup. These included the nuclearization of families and the reduced birth rate which have led to fewer children per family, and the participation of women in the work force. These changes required some adjustment in people's thinking. Within the process of this

change, the aspects that continues to draw the public's attention is the growing lack of morality and unrestrained living habits as well as the extreme level of selfishness within the family unit that threatens the peaceful existence of society's members (Yang, 1992).

Family, to Koreans, represents the group of people belonging to the same bloodline. In the past, people lived in an environment where the neighbors, and sometimes the entire community belonged to the same extended family. However, the current trend for nuclearization of the family and frequent relocation due to social change has caused the parents to be dependent on their own family members, leading them to become narrow-minded and untrusting of non-family members. This exclusiveness in relationships with family members has resulted in the belief that any action can be justified for the collective good of the family, and has further facilitated a family-first attitude. Such attention to the family's well-being to the exclusion of all else inevitably breeds many educational problems. First, when providing their children with motivation for studying, parents encourage the competitive instinct and make them fight with others to secure a better status, instead of fostering self achievement and a sense of accomplishment in education for its own sake. This, of course, leads to overheated competitiveness in children. Second, parents are instilling in the children the idea that, in order to secure fame and status for the family, they should win at any cost no matter what the consequences are. The children subconsciously learn from this attitude that if they excel in academics they will be exempt from any recriminations or responsibilities. Consequently, such educational philosophy and attitude based on family oriented goals work counter to cooperative community existence in our society. According to the survey by Korea Gallup (1980), Korean mothers consider personal traits such as proper greetings, proper language, good manners, and patience to be important while

placing less emphasis on generosity, cooperation, and public awareness.

Also, the introduction of those social ills into our society that were long considered to exist only in western nations, namely the "teenage syndrome" including drugs, drop-outs, violence, and pregnancy, is causing us to reconsider our attitude toward education. It is a warning signal that reminds us that we need to reinforce the educational focus on ethics. Faced with these previously unknown problems, society has established a greater role for its schools in raising responsible citizens. However, the schools are not doing much more than simply passing on the knowledge of educational content and the rudimentary concept of ethical behavior. It has been noted that the schools are not interested in developing a systematic ethics curriculum to help the students in consciously carrying out their lessons in their daily lives and to make those lessons become habitual (The Ministry of Education, 1993). Accordingly, it has become vital to educate the children, who will become the leaders of our nation in the 21st century, to become socially and ethically responsible members of this society.

The Fifth National Kindergarten Curriculum tried to resolve the above mentioned problems that were the results of social change. The current National Kindergarten Curriculum is divided the curriculum into five content areas: physical health, social relationships, expression, language, and inquiry. Unlike the previous national curriculum, the current curriculum has detailed the educational content that children between the ages of three and five should learn. Although designed on the national level, it allows for regional differences, physical layout of the institution, and the developmental levels of children. The National Kindergarten Curriculum is a set of guidelines for kindergarten teachers and provides the overall framework for classroom activities (The Ministry of Education, 1992).

The Ministry of Education considers 'basic education in

daily living' as the main focus of the curriculum and emphasizes 'formation of basic living habits and attitude in children' in all five content areas of the curriculum. This is based on the belief that the children will be able to develop good social relationships through the experience. For the children to be approved and accepted by the society in which they belong, they must act according to the basic social rules and regulations of that specific society. They must know the difference between 'what to do' and 'what not to do.' As they actively participate in their school and family activities, children should develop correct living habits and learn how to form personal relationships; prerequisites in acquiring essential socialization skills.

The most effective teaching method to achieve such goal is to maximally allow for individual differences in children, provide a variety of educational experiences, and give them as many opportunities to make personal choices as possible. Individualized education must be the basic concept for the children but the curriculum should also provide a balanced opportunity for group activities. This is to help the children learn that although they have the right and the freedom to follow their interests and beliefs, they can exercise that right and freedom only as long as the other members of their group are not adversely affected (The Ministry of Education, 1993). The curriculum sought to provide an education that emphasized the whole child by reflecting children's interests and play without using workbooks and worksheets.

Basic Education for Daily Living

The National Kindergarten Curriculum places the greatest amount of emphasis on developing children's basic living habits and attitudes. It means the children will learn and act according to the social standards and principles of Korea's traditions and customs that have been passed down for generations. Children will also learn to adapt to various

aspects of life in today's society. Early childhood is a critical period when the basic framework of the children's daily lives is being constructed and as children grow older, they learn to adapt to their new surroundings based on that framework.

As mentioned in the first part of this paper, traditional Korean society placed a special emphasis on ethics education with lessons on basic manners and habits for daily living. Our ancestors lives were defined by their conformity to the proper manners and required habits which were considered to be one of the most important character traits. Accordingly, faced with the criticism that such traditional values is losing its place in today's rapidly changing society, the National Kindergarten Curriculum is again emphasizing basic manners and habits for young children in an effort to inherit and pass on the values of propriety.

The contents on basic manners and habits for daily living in the National Kindergarten Curriculum is subdivided into four areas: good manners, orderliness, restraint, and cleanliness. Details on cleanliness is provided in the 'physical health' section, while the topics on manners, orderliness, and moderation are covered in the 'social relationships' section. Table 1 provides the contents of each area according to the different levels. Since the children in kindergartens range in age from three to five years old, Level I refers to objectives for three and four-year-olds while Level II refers to the objectives for four to five-year-olds. However, this division of level refers to the sequences of concept and activities rather than clear cut age range.

(Insert Table 1)

As seen in Table 1, the education on good manners in kindergartens is largely divided into three areas: manners in the family (for parents and elders), in groups (relationships with friends, respecting other people's opinions and rights), and for the country. Orderliness teaches the children that there are

rules and regulations to follow in public places and helps the children understand that they must adhere to those rules. Specific activities on orderliness covers getting in line and waiting for their turns, keeping promises, adhering to regulations in playing, conceding to others, and following traffic regulations. Restraint refers to controlling and adjusting one's thoughts and actions depending on the day's circumstances. Restraint kindergarten covers frugality, recycling, controlling emotions depending on the situation and location. Topics on cleanliness includes personal hygiene, specifically dental care, washing hands and face, bathing, appropriate hair care, and dressing properly. It also covers taking care of one's properties, cleaning one's house and its surroundings, and maintaining overall sanitary conditions in one's immediate environment.

Social Relationship and Sense of Community

The current National Kindergarten Curriculum emphasizes the importance of group activity more than the previous four curricula. This is an effort to stress the importance of community and stem the tendency to place too much importance on family ties and selfishness. Kindergartens are now called to play the role of mothers to take care of the children and educate them to become responsible members of a society. Although the Korean society still maintains that education should be carried out within the family, the educational function of the family is diminishing, thus leaving the responsibility to the kindergarten of teaching the children the importance of community and being a member of a society. The contents of the activities in the social relationships area set forth in the National Curriculum are as shown in Table 2.

(Insert Table 2)

As noted in Table 2, the program emphasizes relationships with others, maintaining good relations with them, active participation in group activities, and cooperative problem

solving.

Lee, Ju and Kim (1992) conducted a survey to learn which goals set by the Ministry of Education kindergarten teachers consider important. The majority of the teachers said they stress children's social skills, such as 'to respect the opinions and rights of friends and others', and 'not to bother others and to cooperate with friends.' Therefore, in group activities, social skills and attitudes needed to get along with other people are strongly emphasized.

Emphasis on the Traditional Values

The current National Kindergarten Curriculum also emphasizes the traditional cultural elements and describes in detail traditional Korean games, literature, dances, music, arts, and play things. These points are stressed in the social relationships and expressions areas of the program as shown in Table 3.

(Insert Table 3)

The Ministry of Education explains the contents of Table 3 as follows:

> To foster pride and love for our country, children will be introduced to the national symbols such as the national flag and flower as well as our traditional holidays, games, and goods while understanding the traditional decorum. The children will be given the opportunity to play folk games such as Kangkangsuwollae, shuttlecock game, hit-the-tombstone game, tug of war, Korean style wrestling, mask dance, peasant music and marbles. The children can also experience holidays such as Choosuk - Korean Thanksgiving - and play traditional games such as Yut, kite flying and top spinning. They are also given the opportunity to see some unique aspects of the country such as the literature, clothing and houses (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 87).

Application of the traditional culture to the games is a topic being studied by many scholars. (Yu, 1982; Kim, 1987, Lee & Lee, 1987; Lee et al., 1993). Lee (1990) also studied the application of Korean traditional group games to early childhood education. The study explored the unique educational value of the three traditional group games: Yut, hit-the-tombstone, and kite flying. The Ministry of Education has selected ten traditional games based on such studies that are suitable for kindergarten (Lee et al., 1993).

Restoration of the National Homogeneity and Unification

The changes in the Soviet Union and the reunification of East and West Germany are creating big waves in the Korean Peninsula. South and North Korea became the members of the United Nation in 1991 and the two Koreas signed an 'Agreement for the Reconciliation and Nonaggression and Exchange between South and North Korea.' In light of these new developments, This issue of teaching the children from early on that the North and the South are one nation who share the same ancestors, history, culture, language, and wishes is being raised.

In this context, the current National Kindergarten Curriculum includes such contents as 'to have interest in North Korea and to understand that we are of the same race' and 'to have interest in other countries and find out their customs.' Along with the education on unification of the two Koreas, multi-cultural exposure is being stressed to prepare the children for the age of internationalization and globalization.

However, the current program used in kindergartens to introduce North Korea and other countries is what Derman-Sparks (1992) called a 'tourist curriculum.' It only provides superficial factual information or shows a side of that culture that has become stereotyped. Wearing the same traditional costumes, eating the same food, and playing the same traditional games will not bring homogeneity back to the divided nation. A 'tourist curriculum' cannot provide what is necessary to truly

understand a nation's culture and its national identity. To teach the children about the unification efforts and provide a multi-cultural education, an approach should be developed that allows the children to understand and accept different cultures as equal and interrelated entities rather than simply learning the factual, external aspects of other cultures.

Conclusion

Korea's kindergarten curriculum has seen four revisions since its inception by the Ministry of Education. Earler, Froebel's theory was introduced by American missionaries and Koreans educated in Japan. Later the curriculum was again influenced by the child study movements and the progressive reform kindergarten lead by Dewey.

In the 1980's, the cognitive development theories began to influence the kindergarten curriculum and Montessori theory was widely introduced. Also, various early childhood curriculum models from the United States were adopted. Unfortunately, these theories are not always been accurately understood by the teachers and too often have been misapplied in the classroom. In addition, early childhood educators are expressing concerns about the indiscriminant importation of western educational theories and rising dependency on such theories.

Furthermore, a number of nontraditional educational institutions are developing with the help of parents who are overly enthusiastic about educating their children from an early age. There are an increasing number of institutions teaching academics, music, dance, swimming, and English conversation to young children. Preschoolers are being overwhelmed with academic activities such as workbooks and worksheets due to the 'superbaby syndrome.' As a result, the children are increasingly being pressured to learn 'something.' Such trends are reflected in the fact that 92.3% of children in kindergarten are attending classes

after school (Woo et al., 1992). Although some of the kindergartens use workbooks to satisfy the parents, the number of kindergartens resorting to such extreme measures is quite small.

The current National Kindergarten Curriculum, revised in 1992, points out such problems and emphasizes that kindergartens should strive to practice 'whole child' education, while letting the children explore their interests.

In modern Korean society, the trend towards increased industrialization and urbanization, the increasing number of working mothers, the weakening educational role of households, the evolution of nuclear families, teenage problems, poverty, and the current decaying morality are calling our attention to the education of social skills and basic manners in early childhood education. The education of these topics used to be carried out in everyday living in the past when the families were larger. However, the schools are now being asked to play this role in their education. In the 1970's, the average number of people in a family was 5.48 persons, which decreased to 3.82 in the 1990's (Economic Planning Board, 1970, 1990). Also, only 34.9% of women were working in 1963, compared with 47% in the work force in 1992 (Kim, 1993). Furthermore, family centered values are now shifting the focus to individuals and their achievements, and the traditional society which valued cooperation and interdependency is loosing ground to a materialistic and competitive society. Such changes are enough to confuse the value judgment of children and teenagers. There is an rising concern regarding the lack of concentration, increasing selfishness, disrespect for the elders, and spoiling the children. As a result, the primary function of the kindergarten is now being perceived as rearing good citizens with high moral values and strong sense of community by teaching them good manners and habits, and socializing skills.

Consequently, the National Kindergarten Curriculum is emphasizing teaching children basic daily living skills, such as

manners, orderliness, and restraint, as well as morality, community awareness, traditional cultural values and unification. The program aims to enhance the children's creativity, independence, and autonomy while teaching them to respect the elders and to live in harmony in a group.

Although not expressed clearly, the kindergarten curriculum needs to reevaluate its balance between traditional and modern values, and between domestic and foreign elements. The conservative voices accuse indiscreet application of western values for disrespecting the elders and increasing individualism in the modern society. They also argue that the curricula for early childhood education have been heavily dependent on foreign theories rather than self developed by Koreans, and it is now the time for us to take charge of the development of our own program.

Nevertheless, the western and traditional Korean values and teaching methods appear to be well combined. In the future, the kindergarten curriculum of Korea should be developed with the emphasis being placed on achieving a balance between the traditional and western values and based within the context of Korea's historical, philosophical, social, and cultural values, rather than on whether it is developmentally appropriate or preparing the children for future studies.

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Table 1. The contents of "Good Manners and Habits for Living" from the National Kindergarten Curriculum

Contents	I	II
Having good manners	* Using terms of respect to parents and elders * Properly greeting parents and elders * Saying thank you when help is given	* Using suitable words according to the position of others * Greeting in the appropriate manner according to the person and circumstances * Saying thanks when one receives help; saying sorry if one makes a mistake
Following the rules in group life	* Knowing the daily routine of the home * Recognizing that there are promises which one must keep in the family * Waiting in line and taking turns	* Knowing and following the daily routine of the home * Knowing and keeping promises at home * Knowing when and where one has to wait and taking turns if necessary
Regulating one's own feelings and needs	* Recognizing behavior which will disturb or anger others * Knowing the situations in which one cannot do as one wishes * Knowing the things necessary for everyday living and thinking of ways to be frugal	* Recognizing behavior which will disturb or anger others and trying to restrain oneself * Restraining oneself after recognizing the situations in which one cannot do as one wishes * Knowing the different ways of being frugal and practicing them in daily life

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Table 2. The contents of "Group Life" from The National Kindergarten Curriculum

Contents	I	II
Understanding one's relationships with others	* Understanding the existence of others * Knowing types of behavior which would disturb others	* Understanding the importance of others * Behaving in a way that does not disturb others * Being aware of loneliness and other uncomfortable feelings
Getting along with others	* Understanding that others have their opinions * Differentiating between things which belong to me and those which belong to others * Knowing that play things should be shared	* Understanding that others have different opinions and getting along with them * Understanding that one cannot have things which belong to others * Yielding to friends * Keeping promises made to teachers or friends
Participating actively in group life	* Participating in group activities	* Participating in group activities actively and spontaneously
Solving problems	* Helping friends or asking for help	* Helping friends who need assistance promptly and spontaneously
Understanding and following public rules	* Knowing to follow the regulations in public places	* Knowing the regulations in public places and behaving with good manners

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Table 3. The contents of "Cultural Tradition" from the National Kindergarten Curriculum

Content	I	II
Experiencing national symbols and traditional games	* Knowing the proper name of the nation * Identifying the national flag * Knowing our traditional holidays * Watching someone playing traditional games	* Knowing the proper name of the nation * Knowing how to salute the national flag * Identifying the national symbols * Knowing our traditional holidays * Playing simple traditional games

Culture and the Korean Kindergarten Curriculum

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between Korea's culture and the historical development of its kindergarten curriculum. The paper reviewed the values that were emphasized in a traditional Korean society and analyze how these cultural values are reflected in the National Kindergarten Curriculum through social changes in Korea. The relationship between western theories by Froebel, Montessori, and Piaget, and the Korean National Kindergarten Curriculum, first written in 1969 and subsequently amended in 1979, 1982, 1987, and 1992, was also be explored.